

## **Army's top NCOs answer call to duty**

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More than 300 senior noncommissioned officers representing the active and Reserve components converged on Biggs Army Airfield Monday through today to participate in the 6th Sergeant Major of the Army Nominative Command Sergeants Major Conference hosted by the 13th Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston.

The conference brings together the Army's most senior enlisted NCOs and provides them with an opportunity to interact with their peers and receive briefings and updates on current military issues from senior Army leaders.

Guest speakers for the opening day of the conference included the Secretary of the Army Dr. Francis Harvey and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Richard Cody.

Preston opened the conference thanking everyone for attending and urged them to "think and listen" and to "try and understand the Army from the big picture" as they went about their business during the four-day event.

"You represent the 1.3 million men and women who have dedicated themselves to defending our great Nation and our way of life," said Preston. "Your input [here] demonstrates your individual commitment to improving our great noncommissioned officers corps."

During the conference, senior enlisted leaders were challenged to recommend solutions to difficult issues affecting the Army, particularly issues traditional to the NCO Corps such as recruiting and retention, morale, family programs and education. Preston placed a large emphasis for the conference on necessary changes to the NCO education system, stating that he wants to ensure NCOES is adaptive, innovative and effective at providing NCOs with the tools they will need to be successful on the battlefield. He also noted that the Army is faced with a lot of factors that will impact the future force.

"This past year continued to challenge our Army and our nation. We were fully engaged in the global war on terror while at the same time conducting a monumental troop rotation and the biggest transformation the Army has seen since World War II," Preston said. "That transformation is going to change the way the Army does business in a very short time. It is absolutely key, that we as senior leaders develop a senior enlisted structure in line with a transformed Army. Our new structure will require senior enlisted leaders with intelligence, experience and training. This is what we're here to discuss."

Besides the major emphasis on NCOES, attendees received briefings and updates on safety issues, intelligence, operations, National Guard and Reserve issues, IED task force, base realignment and closure, brigade combat team stationing and semi-centralized promotions. Following the major briefing and updates the attendees broke out into groups consisting of components and major commands to discuss specific issues associated with their particular groups. These working groups briefed their issues and recommendations to the assembly on the final day of the conference.

A first for this year's conference was the inclusion of the sergeants' major spouses, who were briefed on child and youth services, family wellness programs, Army schools, and deployment and redeployment issues.

The conference also served as a reunion of sorts. Eight former sergeants major of the Army also attended the conference: William O. Wooldridge, who was the first sergeant major of the Army taking office in 1965; George V. Dunaway; William C. Bainbridge; Glen E. Morrell; Julius W. Gates; Richard A. Kidd; Robert E. Hall; and Jack L. Tilley.

While attending the conference, the former sergeants major of the Army also participated in an open discussion with the Sergeants Major Course Class 56 students. Preston uses the information garnered from the conference to propose changes that will improve the Army's education, training and operations.



Dr. Francis J. Harvey  
Secretary of the Army



Gen. Richard A. Cody



CSM Kenneth O. Preston